



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE MEDIA RELATIONS DIVISION

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New Charges Added In Los Angeles County Assessor Case

LOS ANGELES – District Attorney Jackie Lacey today announced that the embezzlement and bribery case against County Assessor John Noguez, his chief appraiser and Arizona tax consultant Ramin Salari was amended to add 41 new counts alleging an additional loss of \$9.8 million in taxpayer money.

The amended complaint filed today is part of a continuing investigation into public corruption at the Assessor's Office. Deputy District Attorneys Craig Hum, Susan Schwartz and Michele Gilmer are prosecuting the case.

Noguez, Salari and Mark McNeil, a principal assessor promoted by Noguez to head the Major Appraisal Division, all pleaded not guilty to charges contained in the amended complaint.

In addition to filing an amended complaint, prosecutors announced that they moved to seize more than \$9 million in assets and property belonging to defendant Salari, 50, a tax consultant and campaign contributor to Noguez.

The amended complaint charges the 48-year-old Noguez and Mark McNeil, 55, with 11 new counts each of misappropriation of public funds.

Salari is charged with 41 new counts, including 11 of misappropriation of public funds, 16 of bribery, and seven counts each of embezzlement and grand theft.

The amended complaint alleges that Salari paid more than \$175,000 in bribes to former county appraiser Scott Schenter between 2002 and 2007 to reduce the appraised values on Salari-represented properties.

Schenter, who worked from 1988 to early 2011 as a county appraiser, was charged last year in a separate complaint with allegedly slashing values on multi-million dollar homes, condos and businesses in Beverly Hills, Brentwood and Pacific Palisades. He allegedly secured campaign contributions from the owners of those homes and businesses for Noguez.

The 41 new charges involve 18 properties that were assessed at lower property values throughout Los Angeles County, including Pasadena, Torrance and Van Nuys.

In court today, prosecutors asked Judge Shelly Torrealba to dismiss a total of five counts of misappropriation against all three defendants. Prosecutors determined after further investigation that the five counts did not involve a loss in taxpayer money.

Noguez is charged now with 30 felony counts, including four counts of accepting bribes; five counts of perjury; two counts of conspiracy; and 19 counts of misappropriation by a public officer. The complaint alleges the fraud and embezzlement exceeds \$500,000. If convicted as charged, Noguez faces up to 38 years in state prison.

Salari is charged now with 59 felony counts, including 24 counts of bribing an executive officer; two counts of conspiracy; 19 counts of misappropriation; seven counts of embezzlement; and seven counts of grand theft. If convicted, he faces up to 60 years in state prison.

McNeil is charged with 20 felony counts, including one count of conspiracy and 19 counts of misappropriation by a public officer. If convicted, he faces up to 29 years in state prison.